Analysis and Synthesis of Interview Transcriptions from 14 Participants in NOAA's 2007 Designing Education Projects Workshops

This document synthesizes and analyzes participant responses to questions asked during 14 interviews conducted with participants from the National Weather Service (NWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). There were seven (7) participants from NWS and seven (7) from NMFS; three (3) from each service attended the workshop held in Norfolk and four (4) from each service attended the Seattle workshop offered in April 2007. Interviews occurred over the phone approximately 6 months after the 2007 workshops. The number of participants interviewed represents approximately 40% of the total number of attendees during the two workshops offered in 2007. Transcripts, coded to protect the anonymity of the respondents, are available upon request to the Office of Education.

KEY FINDINGS:

1. The workshops were presented in an appropriate way and contained information and provided materials that are useful to participants.

2. Participants enjoyed and valued the opportunity to meet, learn from, and work with educators from other line offices.

3. Participants would benefit from more opportunities, either at the workshop or before and after the workshop, to think about and process all the information they are learning.

4. Participants want to continue to interact with others from the workshops after the workshop ends and offered a variety of suggestions for accomplishing this.

5. All of the participants interviewed are using and /or intend to use the materials provided and the knowledge gained in the workshop as they work to plan, design, and evaluate their projects.

6. At least half of the participants interviewed have made changes and improvements to their projects based on information they learned from data they collected using instruments they designed.

7. Participants stated that learning a process or framework to apply to their education projects (and in some cases, other types of projects or situations) in either a formal or informal way was very valuable to them and has changed how they approach and think about designing education projects.

RECCOMMENDATIONS:

1. Continue to offer the workshops to NWS and the NMFS employees and expand invitations for participation to other NOAA Line Offices.

2. Continue to offer the workshop to participants from more than one Line Office at a time.

3. Require more from the participants prior to the workshop and provide more follow-up after the workshop ends.

4. Continue to provide and expand the number and variety of examples and case studies provided to participants, possibly pulling them from NOAA education projects.

5. Create a stable, maintained, and monitored interface for workshop participants to continue to interact with one another after the workshop ends.

SYNTHESIS OF INTERVIEWS:

1a) As a professional development opportunity, do you feel that the workshop was a worthwhile experience?

All of the 14 respondents found the workshop to be a worthwhile experience.

b) How so?

The 14 respondents provided the following ways that the workshop was a worthwhile experience. The most frequent response (9) was that the workshop provided a basic process/approach or methodology for conducting planning and evaluating projects (education and others). Five (5) responses stated that gaining an increased understanding of the importance of evaluation as a reason why the workshop was worthwhile; four (4) responses indicated the value of getting experience with the material including experience with developing and using tools was very worthwhile. Making contacts and networking with other NOAA folks was included three (3) times, as was the value of gaining this specific knowledge (3). Responses also indicated that evaluation is useful in justifying projects (2) and one (1) response stated that the workshop changed the respondent's perspective on their audience; another (1) appreciated coming to understand that evaluation is doable.

2) In hindsight, what were the strengths of the workshop?

The interviewees found several aspects of the workshop to be strengths. The most common response was the direct application to and/or involvement of a project that is important to me (7). Five (5) respondents stated that providing a complete project development process/methodology for project planning and evaluation was a strength and five (5) respondents listed the quantity (a lot) of high quality material covered was also a strength of the workshop. Each of the following responses were offered four (4) times:

opportunities to mix and network with other people from NOAA (line office and NOAA OEd employees), effective mix and presentation of material including lecture, discussion, individual work, examples, and hands on activities, and specific information regarding developing various tools and sampling approaches. Two (2) respondents mentioned each of the following four responses: multiple facilitators, specific feedback on projects (mine and others'), case studies/examples, and the share fair. Hand-out materials and the tip for determining the reading level of a document were each mentioned one (1) time.

3) What could be done to improve the workshop?

The most frequent response to this question was more time (5 responses) to think about the material (3) and to complete the plans (2). Other common responses mentioned three (3) times each were: nothing; it was a great workshop, and the opportunity to know more about other participant's projects (which can be related to time). Two (2) participants mentioned each of the following three responses: prior to coming to the workshop, people did not understand what was expected of them at the workshop, more examples of real world projects and small projects would be helpful, and it would be helpful if there was a way for participants to stay in touch after the workshop ended to share experiences, instruments, etc. The following responses were each indicated once (1): More engagement with the case studies or examples prior to the workshop, presentation of a case study or example from beginning to end at the beginning of the workshop, more specific information about instrument design, have participants bring a draft instrument to the workshop for critique, more attention paid to the reality and time constraints of our jobs, and more information from OEd about what is expected in proposals for grant funded projects.

4) How about follow-up to the workshop, is there anything that should be done as follow-up that you think would support participant's efforts after the workshop has ended?

Eleven (11) of the 14 interviewees would like some way to interact with and/or get feedback from other participants or the facilitators from the workshop. Six (6) of these interviewees specifically cited success stories, model application, and/or tool development as areas they would like to explore further with others. Additionally, one (1) respondent would like to know more about what participants in the other workshop did or are doing, another (1) would like to discuss education as a priority in NOAA from a big-picture perspective with people from the workshop, and one (1) other participant would like additional information about internal and external funding sources. Suggested ways for accomplishing this desired interaction and information exchange included: an email list or chat room (5), a place (website) to share information on successes, tools, resources (including workshop materials), and to get feedback (5), webinars and or conference calls(4), and a one-day follow-up in person meeting (2). Three (3) interviewees thought a follow-up interview (like this one) was a good idea, and another would like more time to finalize their evaluation plan and get additional feedback. Three (3) participants did not think any additional follow-up was needed.

5a) Have you revisited your logic model or evaluation plan since attending the workshop?

Of the 14 responses, nine (9) stated that they have revisited their logic model or evaluation plan since attending the workshop (response = yes), three (3) stated that they have not (response = no), and two (2) responded yes and no (included in both below).

If yes, for what reasons?

Eleven (11) responses had an affirmative aspect to them. Six (6) interviewees revisited their logic model or evaluation plan in order to continue the work they started at the workshop and five (5) revisited it to refresh their memory on what they were thinking while at the workshop. One (1) participant has used their logic model and evaluation plan to make improvements to their project, and another (1) participant has used their logic model and evaluation plan to write a grant proposal and in working with a graduate student who is conducting research related to the participant's project.

If no, Can you tell me why not?

Of the five (5) negative responses (response = no or yes and no), three (3) participants stated that the reason was a lack of time to focus on this since returning from the workshop. Another (1) participant is working on an education project other than the one developed in class. The remaining participant (1) prefers to use reference material and does not typically refer to her own work.

b) Have you used the Designing Education Projects book or notebook materials?

Of the 14 responses, eight (8) have used the Designing Education Projects book or notebook materials (response = yes), two (2) said they were using them some (counted as yes), and four (4) have not used the materials (response = no).

If yes, for what reasons?

Of the ten (10) interviewees who are using the book or notebook materials, nine (9) use them as a reference when verifying information or when developing something new or changing something they have already created. Four (4) participants have used the written materials to determine appropriate tools to use to assess specific audiences and to gather information on how to develop those tools. In addition, two (2) participants provided information from the book and/or notebook to a colleague working on something related to the workshop, and one (1) participant has used the book and notebook materials when writing a grant proposal.

If no, Can you tell me why not?

Of the four (4) interviewees who stated that they are not using the book or notebook materials, three (3) indicated that they use the information (which is in their head) but just

have not looked at the written materials. Reasons for not using the written materials are: time - I just have not gotten back to it (2), I have not needed the written materials (1), and I do not use reference materials (1).

c) Have you shared your workshop experience with others?

Of the 14 responses, twelve (12) have shared their workshop experience with others (response = yes), and two (2) have not (response = no).

If yes, How so?

Of the twelve interviewees who have shared their experience with others, ten (10) have shared their experience with colleagues at their office or at a meeting, and four (4) have shared their experience with their boss or other managers. Three (3) participants shared their experience to provide support for changes they are making or plan to make and three (3) responses indicated that they shared what a valuable and positive experience the workshop was.

If there is a reason why not, would you share that with me?

Only two (2) interviewees have not shared their workshop experience with anyone. One (1) does not perceive of anyone who would benefit from this experience at this time; the other (1) has not had time but wants to share the experience with the outreach team at the office.

d) Have you developed an observation form, an interview guide or a questionnaire to evaluate your project?

Of the 14 responses, ten (10) interviewees have developed or continued to develop an observation form, an interview guide or a questionnaire to evaluate their project (response = yes), and four (4) have not continued work on their instruments (response = no).

If no, Can you tell me why not?

Of the four (4) interviewees who have not developed and instrument, two (2) stated that they have not had enough time, one (1) is not focused on this right now and another (1) is not at the point where an instrument is needed.

If yes, for what reasons?

Of the ten (10) participants who have continued to work on their instruments, nine (9) are using instruments they developed to evaluate existing projects, and two (2) have developed instruments for projects they plan to conduct (one participant is represented in both categories). Five (5) responses indicated that the instruments will be used to improve what is being done or offered.

Did you collect any data?

Of the ten (10) participants who created at least one instrument, seven (7) have collected some data and three (3) have not used their instrument to collect data. Two (2) of participants who have not collected data indicated that a lack of time has prevented this from happening.

Did you analyze the data?

All seven (7) of the interviewees have analyzed the data to some extent or were in the process of analyzing it when the interview was conducted.

What did you learn if anything?

Of the seven (7) interviewees who analyzed their data, six (6) stated that the learned specific information regarding improving their project. In addition, each of the following were offered one (1) time by interviewees as information they learned from analyzing their data: what individual presenters can do to improve their presentations, how to write effective questions to assess understanding, and a sense of the effect my project has on the participants.

Did this cause you to make or plan any changes in your projects?

All seven (7) interviewees who learned from the data they collected are using it to improve their projects. For example, four (4) are changing what they offer, three (3) are changing how they present the information, and two (2) are changing how they assess participants or users.

6a) Have you used any of the case studies you encountered in the workshop in any way?

Of the 14 responses, five (5) have used the case studies encountered in the workshop (response = yes) and nine (9) have not used any of the case studies encountered in the workshop in any way (response = no).

If yes, How so?

Of the five (5) interviewees who responded affirmatively, all five stated that there was at least one case study with some aspect(s) that related to their project. One (1) of the responses stated that general feedback on the case studies was also indirectly beneficial to them.

If no, Can you tell me why not?

The nine (9) interviewees who responded negatively provided the following reasons for not using the case studies: the case studies were not relevant to my project or there was

not a direct connection to my project (4), I have not had time to use them in any way since the workshop (3), I don't even remember them (2), and there has not been a reason for me to use them (1). One (1) interviewee did not answer the question asked.

b) Is there a way to improve the case studies to make them more useful?

Of the 14 interviewees, seven (7) participants offered the following ways to improve the case studies: make them more applicable to my work (5), provide case studies covering more types of projects (3), provide case studies from other organizations or parts of NOAA (1), have workshop participants write-up their projects as case studies (1), and have someone present a case study step by step in the workshop (1). Four (4) of the participants stated that there was no way to improve them because they were fine as they are. Three (3) participants did not remember them. One (1) interviewee did not answer the question asked.

7) Have you initiated any new projects or revised your education project since the workshop ended?

Of the 14 responses, thirteen (13) have initiated a new project or revised their existing education project since the workshop ended (response = yes) and the remaining one (1) plans to make revisions over the winter.

Was anything you learned in the workshop helpful as you worked on this project?

All 14 respondents indicated that things they learned in the workshop were helpful as they worked on this project (response = yes).

Please explain.

Eleven (11) of the interviewees stated that learning a process or framework to apply to education (and in some cases, other types of projects or situations) in either a formal or informal way was very valuable to them and has changed how they approach and think about designing education projects. Three (3) responses identified developing and administering specific tools as helpful. One (1) interviewee stated that as a result of the workshop, he now looks at projects from the user's perspective; another (1) interviewee found having access to the variety and quantity of resources and materials from the workshop was beneficial.

8) Is there anything else you would like to share related to the workshop?

Each of the 14 interviewees provided some additional thoughts about the workshop. Ten (10) responses stated that the workshop was very positive, a good experience, and/or enjoyable, and nine (9) responses indicated that the participant intends to use what they learned in the workshop. Six (6) participants thought that interaction with people from across the agency was very positive, and three (3) participants specifically stated that they hope these workshops continue. Each of these comments were provided one (1) time: the

individual feedback was great, and it was good to learn about this model and how it works. Each of the following suggestions for improvement were included in one (1) response: provide more emphasis on the importance of this workshop in advance, provide more specifics about a format for the project descriptions in advance, provide more specific information on how to apply the content to small projects, provide more information on developing federal (OMB approved) surveys, provide more information on writing successful grant proposals, include participants from additional line offices/NOAA programs and do not make the workshops mandatory.